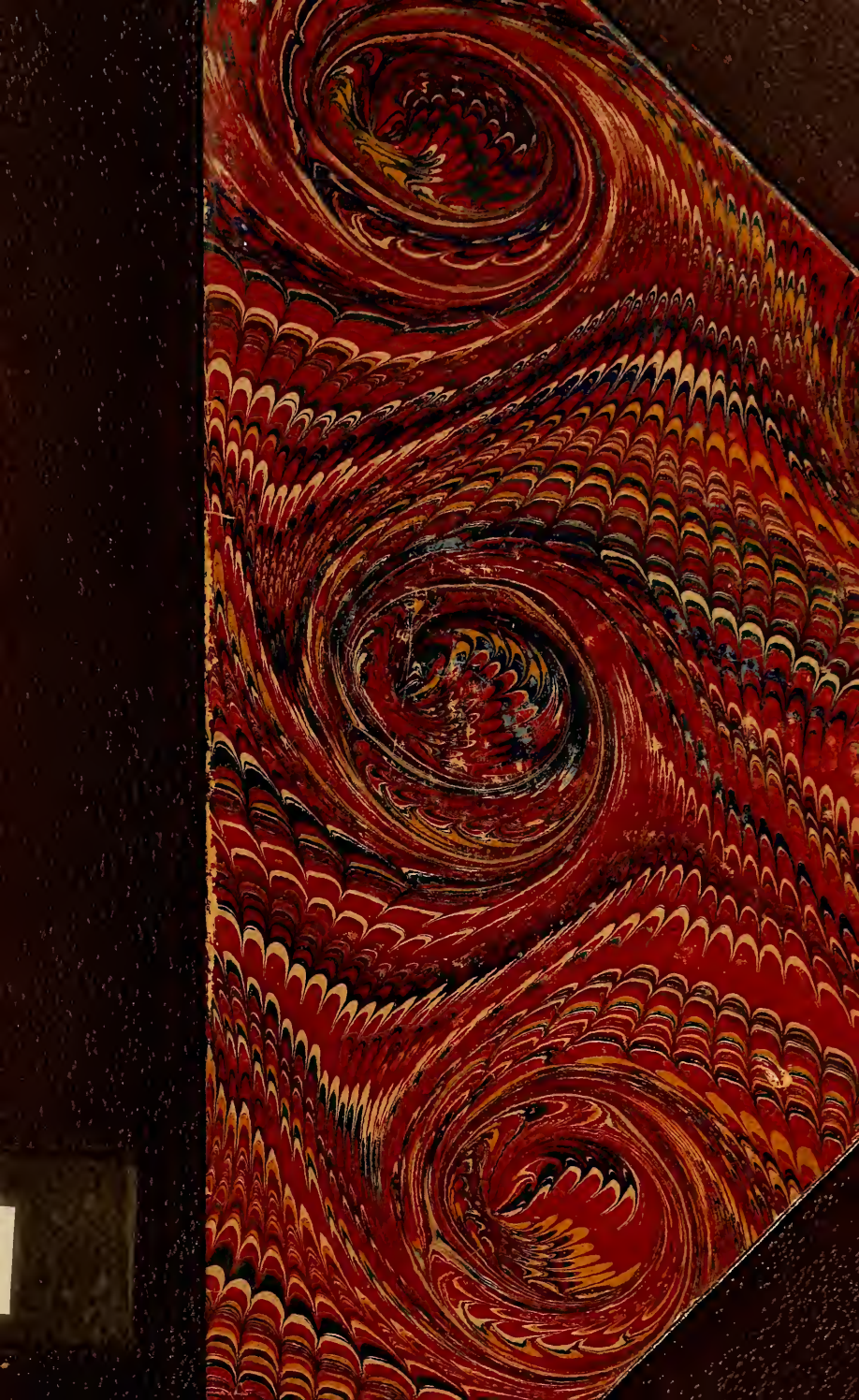




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THE BLIND: AN OCCASIONAL PAPER.

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The Blind.

OCCASIONAL PAPER.

No. 1.

JANUARY 20TH, 1898.

All communications for the next number must be sent on or before April 1st to Mr. Henry J. Wilson, Hon. Editor, 53, Victoria Street, Westminster, London, S.W.

The Editor does not of necessity identify himself with opinions which may be expressed in the signed articles or in letters of correspondents, and the right is reserved of not printing any letter which may seem not to come within the limits of a discussion likely to be profitable. Letters must be accompanied by the writer's name and address.

Copies of this Paper, price 3d. each, or 3½d. post free, can be obtained from the Editor.

EDITORIAL.

There is, undoubtedly, amongst those who work in the interests of the Blind, a feeling that they are not sufficiently in touch one with another, and that consequently they are not individually cognisant of much that is being done on behalf of the Blind by Institutions and Societies beyond the limited horizon of the Charity in which they themselves are personally interested.

There is also amongst the vast majority of sighted people, a great deal of ignorance as to what the Blind can do, and what is being done on their behalf.

It was, therefore, with the main object of disseminating this much needed information that I submitted to the Committee of Gardner's Trust for the Blind a proposal to issue "Occasional Papers" on January 20th, April 20th, July 20th, and October 20th. The Committee most kindly consented to print the papers during 1898 as a tentative measure, leaving me personally responsible for the letterpress. The success of the undertaking must chiefly depend on the support given to it by those who are active workers for the amelioration of the condition of the Blind. I shall therefore be glad to receive recent information about any matter affecting them which may be thought to be of general interest. Particulars of any new institutions or societies, or of any new trade and its probable success would be most useful. Two conditions, however, must be made. One—that neither

personalities nor reference to the management of any Society can be permitted ; and the other—that the right must be reserved to myself as Editor, of using my discretion as to the insertion of any article, although it is my hope that there will be no need to exercise such right.

It is well to begin in a small way, but it is very desirable that these papers should develop into a self-supporting magazine in the interests of the Blind, and it need hardly be added that no efforts shall be wanting on my part to make it a success.

In the present number the special articles are on "A Small Workshop," by Mr. Alfred Hirst, who wrote that highly interesting article, entitled "My Dark World," in the *Sunday Magazine* for April last, and on "Prevention of Blindness," by the Editor. In the next number the special articles will be on "Type Writing," by Mr. Henry Stainsby, Secretary of the General Institution for the Blind at Edgbaston, who has had eighteen years experience of work on their behalf, and on "Home Teaching Societies," by Miss Edith M. Bainbrigge, Secretary of the London Home Teaching Society. I hope, that in consequence of these and other articles, a correspondence may arise in these pages embodying the views of those who differ from the writers, and that thereby much valuable information may be elicited.

HENRY J. WILSON.

NOTES.

The Royal Normal College for the Blind, Upper Norwood, is now recognised by the Education Department as a Training College for Blind students who are preparing to become teachers in Schools for the Blind, under the name of "The Smith Training College," so called after the late Right Hon. W. H. Smith. A Queen's Scholarship Examination was held at the College for the first time for Blind students in July, 1896, when twenty passed. At the examination in July, 1897, five were examined and four passed.

The Report of the Education Department for 1896 and 1897 on Schools for the Blind states that the certified schools provide accommodation for 1476 blind children, viz., 268 day scholars and 1208 boarders.

A lending Library has been started at the office of Gardner's Trust for the Blind for the free use of University students. The Library consists of Taswell-Langmead's English Constitutional History, the Preface to Dr. Stubbs' Select Charters, most of the works of Cæsar, Cicero, Demosthenes, Herodotus, Homer, Horace, Plato, Sophocles, Tacitus, Thucydides, Virgil, Xenophon, &c., &c., besides notes on Greek and Roman History, Logic, Greek and Latin Syntax, Greek and Latin Verse Composition, &c., &c. The classical works, &c., are a spontaneous and free gift to the Trust by Mr. T. Barnard, who was at Worcester Blind College, and took a second class in Classics at Oxford. Application for the loan of any of these books, which are all in Braille type, should be made to the Secretary of the Trust, 53, Victoria Street, S.W.

It is not generally known that a Public Reference Library, in connection with the Education Department, has been opened at 43, Parliament Street, S.W. All the reports, pamphlets, &c., from various countries, supplied to the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb, &c., are incorporated with the general collection.

"The Fawcett Memorial Scholarship," value £42 a year, tenable for four years, at any University in the United Kingdom, including Women's Colleges, is at present held by Mr. A. J. Dexter at Oxford. The former holders were Mr. A. N. Shaw and Mr. T. Barnard, both at Oxford.

The Committee of the Liverpool School for the Indigent Blind (founded in 1791) have recently acquired Wavertree Hall, and about 3½ acres of land connected with it, as a site for the erection of a new School for Blind Children, the intention being

that the existing building, situate in the heart of the city, should in future be used entirely for adults, and that the new building in Wavertree (which is a suburb of Liverpool) should be used exclusively for children. There are at present 47 children being educated in the present building, and the new building is capable of holding 75 children. The site that has been selected is about four miles from Liverpool, and opens on to a park that has recently been presented to the public, so that the position is assured. "Wavertree Hall" has been pulled down, and a modern building, suitable in every respect for the requirements of blind children, is in course of erection, and it is anticipated that it will be open for use about next midsummer. The land cost £3700, and the contract for the new building was £12,350, but since the building was commenced, a separate wing, comprising a Gymnasium, has been added at an increased cost of £960. The building consists of a large dining-room and ample class-rooms and play rooms, also an isolated ward in case of sickness, and the gardens will afford ample space for playgrounds for the children.

The Rev. H. J. R. Marston, M.A., an old pupil of Worcester Blind College, who has been Rector of Icomb, Gloucestershire, since 1883, has recently been appointed to the important living of St. John's, Belgrave Square, London, S.W. Mr. Marston took first class honours in Classics at Durham University in 1876, and became a Fellow of the University in the following year. He was ordained priest in 1880 by the late Bishop of Worcester (Dr. Philpott.)

Not long since a Lady Guardian enquired at one of the London Workhouses, where a teacher from the Home Teaching Society for the Blind was not admitted, what books there were for the use of the blind inmates, and she was informed that there was only *one* book—Leviticus!—in Moon's type. Since then, in consequence of the lady's representations, a teacher visits the inmates regularly.

A SMALL WORKSHOP FOR THE BLIND.

"We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes ; we stumble at noonday as in the night."

"And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them." *Isaiah*.

In his last address to the last of his knights King Arthur began by saying :

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new."

Now so far as the Blind are concerned, the old order did not begin to give way to the new, one moment too soon. When the late Dr. T. R. Armitage took up the work more than 35 years ago the state of things which then obtained was not merely ripe but rotten, and awaited not merely evolution but almost needed and deserved revolution. Though since that time much has been done, "yet much remains to conquer still."

The best translation of the motto "*experientia docet*" is the phonetic one, "experience does it," and perhaps a short account of my little workshop for the blind at Whitby will encourage the formation of similar shops in suitable towns all over the country. I have known Whitby well for more than 30 years, having made it my holiday resort year after year. One never wearies of this picturesque old port on the Esk, with its bold breaker-beaten coast and pleasant beach, its fine stone pier and noble Abbey. As to the Esk itself, there is not a furlong of its course from its cradle on the western moors to its grave in the bay of Whitby, which cannot boast a peculiar charm and interest. But to my task. Having decided to come and live in this charming neighbourhood I chose a house in the pretty little village of Ruswarp which is about a mile and a half from the town. More than ten years before I had made the acquaintance of a blind basket-maker here who had been trained in that noble institution, the Wilberforce School for the Blind at York. He had left there before the Braille type had been introduced, and I had the pleasure of teaching him the system. I came to my new home

in the middle of the severe winter of 1894-95, and one of my first visits was to my old friend. He lived in a fairly comfortable but very much out-of-the-way cottage. The position of his home had doubtless something to do with his want of work, for I found him with little or nothing to do. At this time I had no idea of his extraordinary capacity. I thought that he was only able to make a few tradesmen's baskets, hampers, etc. I soon found, however, that there was nothing which could be made out of wicker which George Groves could not make perfectly, and this without the slightest supervision by the sighted, if my readers will forgive the tautology. I at once gave him orders to make samples of his wares, and from that day to this he has been fully occupied on work of the best class. There were two other ex-pupils of the York School living in Whitby. I gave these men sample orders also, and from that day to the present time they also have been kept in full work. One of them was married, and he and his wife and baby were in a sad plight. Here again the home was in a place where customers of the better class would never venture, so I took a suitable cottage in Ruswarp for him. This cottage was named "Armitage Cottage," and had a nice little back room which was turned into a workshop. A sign was placed over the front door detailing the occupant's abilities and also quoting part of Milton's noble sonnet to Cyriac Skinner. The quotation ends with those soul-animating words

" nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward."

The third young man was in better circumstances than either of the others, as his father was a joiner and builder. He had done little or no work since the completion of his education and training. This was the more strange as he was not only a first-rate basket maker, but also an excellent mattress-maker. I adopted the same test in his case as with the former two, and told him to make me a dozen sample baskets. I was surprised and delighted with the excellence of his work, and from that time until now he also has been full of work. I sold as many of

their baskets as possible to friends, but at one time there was a spare room in my house full of these goods, and my friends thought I had gone into the wholesale basket trade. Of course, in those early days I had some difficulty in finding a market for all my men could make; but the change in their positions was ample reward for all the time and trouble spent in their service. It was not long after that I became convinced that the only satisfactory way of continuing the work would be to open a shop where their beautiful goods could be seen. I was determined that if I did take a shop that it should be not only a good one, but one in a good position. So I kept, as it were, my eyes open, and after many disappointments secured premises at 2, Brunswick Street, which have quite answered expectations. With grants from the Gardner Trust and the York Institution, and a small one from the ever generous Clothworkers' Company, and with kind gifts from some of my relatives and friends, including one from the leading local solicitor, the premises after being thoroughly renovated were comfortably furnished and equipped with every necessity for carrying on the work. Most of the year and especially during the autumn months when the visitors to Whitby come, the men work in a work-shop opening out of the sale room. Customers can see them at work, and to many the sight is a revelation. There is this advantage arising from this ocular demonstration. There is no deception. The customer can see his or her order in process of manufacture.

We shall not have been in these premises for two years until March next. The success of the venture is, however, complete. The best people in the neighbourhood are finding out slowly but surely what excellent goods are made by these men. Far more orders come in than they can execute, and these are sent on to what I may call the mother institution at York. Amongst many others, the Rev. the Marquis of Normanby and Sir Charles Mark Palmer have been good customers. I have been very much indebted also to personal friends in the West Riding and elsewhere, including Archdeacon Wilson of Rochdale (whose interest in all branches of blind work is so well known) for extensive orders for bazaars and sales

of work. Not a few of these orders have been for five and even ten guineas worth at once. We have not had a single complaint as to the quality of the goods sent, and all find a ready sale. I am glad to say that the tradespeople of the town are discovering that our baskets are much cheaper in the long run than the flimsy foreign trash which can be got at nominally low prices. As to the durability of our baskets, we had a remarkable proof the other day. Soon after Groves completed his training at York, now more than 25 years ago, he made for a lady in Whitby, a soiled linen basket. The basket has been in constant use ever since, and it was only the other day that for the first time it came back to him for some slight repairs. As to the demand for our goods, I may say that at the present moment there is not in the sale room a single unsold specimen of about twenty of our standard and most popular baskets. Our mattress-maker has just had several weeks work in that branch, and the basket department was quite blocked with orders whilst he was absent from it.

I should like here to give an abstract from a sketch of the late Dr. T. B. Armitage, which I wrote for the Sunday Magazine for November, 1896. In describing the state in which that great benefactor of the blind found them when he first commenced his self-imposed mission. "Like Samson, one and all seemed to be asking the question, 'To what can I be useful, wherein serve my nation?'" And the answer which Manoah's son gave to his own question could have been given by almost every blind person whom Dr. Armitage visited. There was little for man or woman to do—

"But to sit idle on the household hearth,
A burdenous drone, to visitants a gaze
Or pitied object."

Dr. Armitage found it difficult to help effectually because there had been no training worthy of the name. On the other hand I found my work easy on account of the excellent training all the men had enjoyed at York. How important then is this training! All friends of the blind must hope that our government will, without delay, raise the school age of the blind to

twenty-one, so that they may be turned out of the institutions thoroughly masters of some craft. Basket-making I think is a much more desirable calling than brush-making. It is much more interesting work, and may be followed at home, whereas it is necessary to live in the neighbourhood of some institution to get work as a brush maker. Nothing can exceed the interest which Mr. Buckle and his Committee at York take in the success of their old pupils. Of course each man is provided at cost price with the best willows and other materials. Other important help is ungrudgingly rendered. It is of the utmost importance that the blind have blocks of all their standard baskets. Then the shape must be right. One would have supposed that this fact would have been obvious to the most casual observer; and yet it is only of late years that sighted managers have introduced forms for the making of all high class work.

For special objects too, my men find their old "Alma Mater" ready to help them with timely and liberal grants. I am glad to hear that the York Institution is about to open another shop at Middlesbro', which is sure to succeed much better than the one here, on account of the population being much greater. There are many other suitable places in this great county of York where these small shops might be opened. Such towns as Bridlington and Harrogate are most suitable.

Of course it is important to manage them economically. The plan is to instal a blind man of ability and good character as manager, with his wife or sister to attend to the sale room and the house generally. In order to lessen the cost at Whitby I furnished a sitting room and two bedrooms in such a way that they could be let to visitors during the season. This has answered admirably, as the lodgings are always well let during the season, and without exception on leaving all the visitors have recorded their satisfaction with the rooms, cooking and attendance in a Visitors' Book kept for the purpose. I may mention that the men receive in full the selling price of their work. No deduction is made for what is called shop commission. Now it is time that this tedious tale should end, for I am afraid that the reading of it will prove tedious. I can only say in conclusion

that I shall be most happy to show the place to any one interested in the work, and especially to those who contemplate starting similar small shops elsewhere.

ALFRED HIRST.

PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS.

It seems appropriate that, in the first number of the "Occasional Papers" on matters relating to the Blind, reference should be made to that most important subject—the prevention of blindness. That a large number of people have become blind through *preventible* causes is a fact that cannot be questioned, though there may be a difference of opinion as to the percentage of such cases amongst the total number of blind persons.

With this regrettable fact before us, every effort should be made—and especially by those cognisant of the difficulties to be encountered by blind persons—to disseminate information that may be the means of preventing persons from becoming blind through ignorance and neglect. The inflammation of the eyes of new-born infants is the *fons et origo* of much preventible blindness, and we have it on the authority of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb, &c., that about 7000 persons in the United Kingdom have lost their sight from this disease, although it can be prevented, and, if taken in time, cured. The question seems to be one of such paramount importance that warnings ought to be issued broadcast throughout the land, with simple and clear instructions, by the Government, as suggested by the Royal Commission.

In March, 1896, I wrote to the Secretary of the General Post Office, to enquire whether leaflets had been circulated

through that medium, as recommended by the Royal Commission, and the reply was—

“I am directed by the Postmaster-General to state that, whilst he has every sympathy with the object in view, he is of opinion that the circulation of information respecting the treatment of purulent ophthalmia would fall within the province of the Sanitary Authority, rather than that of the Post Office.”

I then wrote to the Medical Officer of the Local Government Board, and his answer was—

“The question of purulent ophthalmia, and its relation to blindness in no way comes within my province as Medical Adviser to this Board in matters relating to Public Health.

“In so far as it has to do with the Board’s administration, it concerns the Poor Law Department, and I have, in consequence, submitted your letter to one of the Secretaries of that Department.”

Nothing, however, has as yet been done, as far as I am aware, in the way of issuing leaflets to the public. It has hitherto been left to Societies, or to individuals to distribute literature on this subject, and what has been done is a mere drop in the ocean.

I believe that the first person who dealt with this subject systematically in England was the late Dr. Roth, who started a “Society for the Prevention of Blindness.” This Society, alas! has ceased to exist since the death of its founder.

Dr. Andrew Wilson has also drawn attention to this subject in those interesting weekly articles of his, called “Science Jottings,” in the *Illustrated London News*, and on April 29th, and May 6th, 1894, he wrote two most clear and instructive articles on this question, under the title of “The Home—Health and how to preserve it” in *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, which has a large circulation among the working classes.

Other efforts have been made by the Committees of some of the Institutions and Societies for the Blind, by printing necessary precautions in their Annual Reports, and by distri-

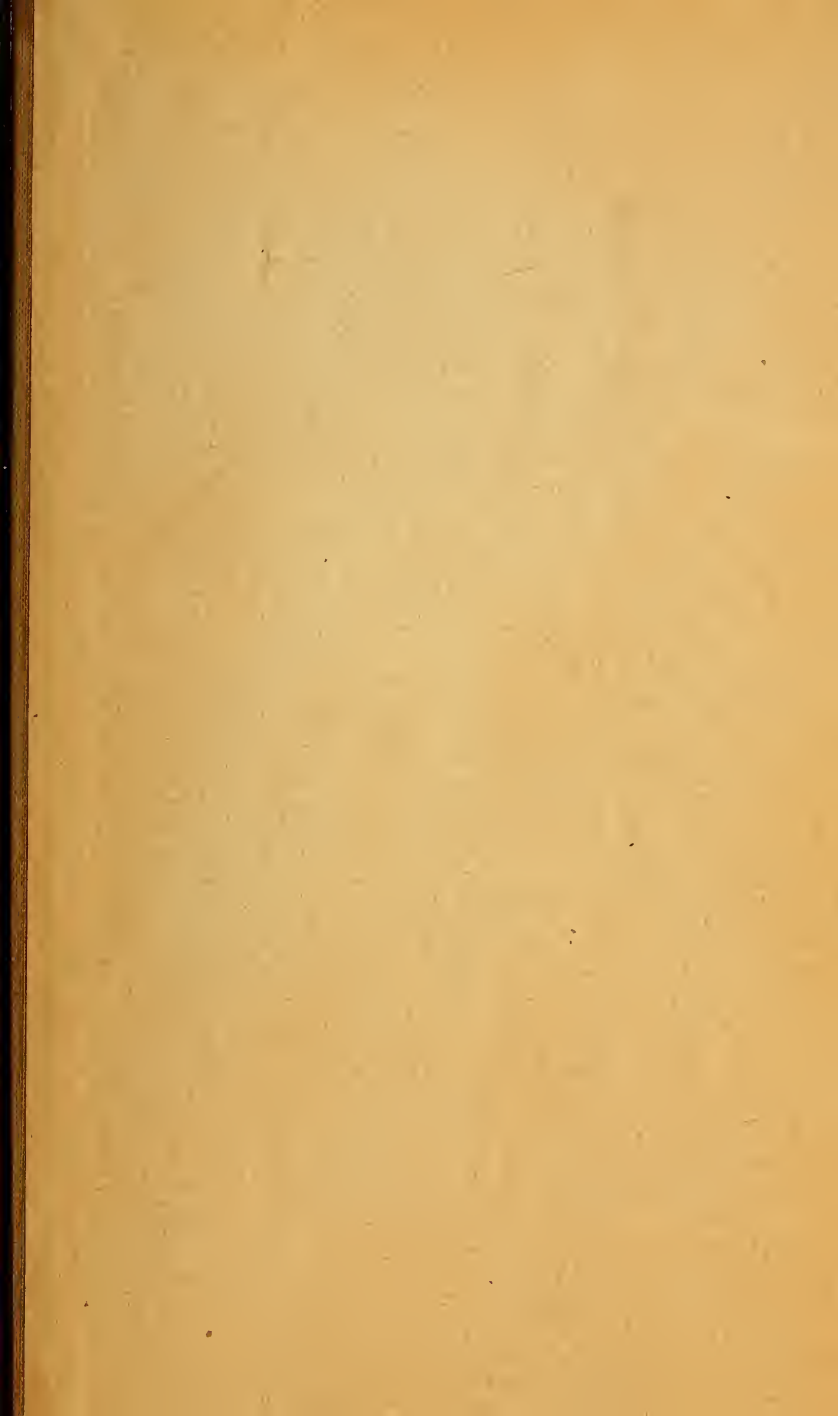
buting leaflets, by the Ladies' Sanitary Association, 22, Berners Street, W., and by the Committee of Gardner's Trust for the Blind, who have recently circulated over 42,000 leaflets throughout England and Wales, to various Guardians of the Poor, Secretaries of the Charity Organization Society, branches of the Mothers' Union, &c. Copies of these leaflets are sent gratis to anyone who will kindly undertake to distribute them among the poor, on application at the office of the Trust, 53, Victoria Street, London, S.W.

The ignorance of some people is almost beyond belief. Only a short time ago a case was brought to my notice in which a three weeks old infant was threatened with inflammation of the eyes, and the mother, instead of taking it to the Hospital, had been applying boiled watercresses as a remedy, with the most sanguine expectations. Luckily the lady visitor had read one of the Gardner Trust leaflets, and successfully urged on the mother the duty of at once seeking medical advice, with the result that the child is now quite well.

There are many other causes of blindness which can be obviated by common prudence, such as chipping or breaking stones without wearing fine wire goggles, allowing children to play with kittens or to throw sand at each other, or to play with gunpowder, straining the eyes by working with too strong or too weak an artificial light, inattention to an accident to one eye, thereby causing sympathetic inflammation in the other, &c., &c. Blacksmiths, and those who work with lime should be warned of the dangers attending their trades.

In conclusion, I would say that I earnestly hope all that has been said and written about the prevention of blindness may stir up many minds to bring this important subject forward to the prominent place it undoubtedly deserves.

HENRY J. WILSON.





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